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THE STATUS OF BUTORIDES BRUNESCENS
(LEMBEYE).

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A recent investigation into the races of *Butorides virescens*, undertaken for the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, involved an examination of the peculiar *Butorides brunescens* of Cuba. This was necessary in order to determine the proper name for the form of *Butorides virescens* inhabiting the island of Cuba, since, if *Butorides brunescens* should prove to be merely a color phase of *Butorides virescens* in Cuba, the subspecific name of that form would, of course, become *brunescens*. Although the number of specimens examined is small, for *Butorides brunescens* is a rare bird in collections, the conclusions reached seem worthy of permanent record. To the authorities of the United States National Museum acknowledgments are due for the use of the specimens which form the basis of these notes.

Described from an unknown locality in Cuba, by Lembeye, in 1850,* *Butorides brunescens* has often been considered a color phase of *Butorides virescens*, though by some authors treated as a distinct species.† In addition to the fact that it occurs only in Cuba and the Isle of Pines,‡ where it seems to be permanently resident, all the evidence gathered from the examination of between 500 and 600 specimens of the various forms of *Butorides virescens* and several examples of *Butorides brunescens*, both adult and young, points to the conclusion that the latter

**Ardea brunescens* Lembeye, Aves de la Isla de Cuba, 1850, p. 81, pl. XII.

† Baird, Rep. Explor. and Surv. R. R. Pac., IX, 1858, p. 677; Ridgway, Manual North Amer. Birds, 1887, p. 131; Cory, Auk, IV, 1887, p. 327; *et al.*

‡ The ostensible Jamaica record (March, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 1861, p. 61) is based on a mere supposition of its occurrence there.

is a perfectly distinct species, though of about the same size as *Butorides virescens* from Cuba. It has also the same habits and associates freely with the latter, at least on its feeding grounds.

In adult plumage the uniform chestnut neck and sides of head, the dark, inconspicuous wing edgings, and other less striking characters, distinguish it at a glance from any of the forms of *Butorides virescens*, save perhaps occasional specimens from the island of San Miguel, one of the Pearl Islands, in the Bay of Panama, to which superficial resemblance Messrs. Thayer and Bangs have already called attention.* With this bird, however, there is not any real intergradation in color, for *Butorides brunescens* never has, so far as we know, the broadly whitish edge of wing, the narrow pale margins of wing-coverts, nor any indication of a median light or white stripe on throat or jugulum, all of which are present in even the most extreme specimens of *Butorides virescens* from the Pearl Islands. In juvenal plumage there is still more striking contrast of colors, for the juvenal stage of the bird from the Pearl Islands is of practically the same pattern as the young of all the other races of *Butorides virescens*, and thus very different from the dark, dull, almost uniform (except for pileum, wings, back, and tail) brownish coloration of juvenal *Butorides brunescens*. Nor is there, in the young, any suggestion of intermediate vergence toward any form of *Butorides virescens*. The following further account of this rare species may prove of interest in this connection.

***Butorides brunescens* (Lembeye).**

Ardea brunescens LEMBEYE (GUNDLACH MS.), Aves de la Isla de Cuba, 1850, p. 84, pl. XII (Cuba).

Ardea brunescens A. and E. NEWTON, Ibis, 1859, p. 262 (Cuba; in text); GUNDLACH, Journ. f. Orn., 1871, p. 282; REICHENOW, Journ. f. Orn., 1877, p. 255 (Cuba); CORY, Auk IV, 1887, p. 327 (Cuba); Birds West Indies, 1889, p. 248 (Cuba); Cat. West Indian Birds, 1892, p. 90 (Cuba); MAYNARD, Cat. Birds West Indies, 1898, p. 4 (Cuba).

Ardea brunescens REICHENOW, Journ. f. Orn., 1877, p. 277; RIDGWAY, Man. North Amer. Birds, 1887, p. 131 (Cuba); *ibid.*, ed. 2, 1895, p. 131 (Cuba); *ibid.*, ed. 4, 1900, p. 131 (Cuba); CORY, List Birds West Indies, 1885, p. 28 (Cuba); *ibid.*, rev. ed., 1886, p. 28 (Cuba).

Oeniscus brunescens CABANIS, Journ. f. Orn., 1856, p. 344 (Cuba); BREWER, Proc. Bost. Soc. Nat. Hist., VII, 1860, p. 308 (Cuba);

* Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., XLVI, September, 1905, pp. 142-144.

- GUNDLACH, Journ. f. Orn., 1875, p. 308 (Cuba); Contrib. Ornít. Cubana, 1876, p. 156 (Cuba).
- [*Ocuiscus*] *brunescens* GUNDLACH, Repert. Físico-Nat. Cuba, I, 1866, p. 350 (Cárdenas, Cuba).
- Butorides brunescens* BAIRD, Rep. Explor. and Surv. R. R. Pac., IX, 1858, p. 677 (Cuba; in text); Cat. Amer. Birds, 1859, p. 13, No. 494; Birds North Amer., 1860, p. 677 (Cuba; in text); LAWRENCE, Ann. New York Lyc. Nat. Hist., VII, 1860, p. 271 (Cuba); NEWTON, Ibis, 1861, p. 275 (in text); ALLEN, Bull. Nutt. Orn. Club, V, 1880, p. 88 (in text); Ridgway, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., III, 1880, pp. 214, 237; Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 21, 1881, pp. 60, 83; GUNDLACH, Ornít. Cubana, 1893 (1895), p. 189 (Cuba); BANGS and ZAPPEY, Amer. Nat., XXXIX, Apr., 1905, p. 188 (Isle of Pines); THAYER and BANGS, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., XLVI, No. 8, Sept., 1905, p. 142 (Cuba; in text).
- B[utorides]. brunescens* RIDGWAY, in Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway, Water Birds North Amer., I, 1884, p. 49 (Cuba).
- [*Butorides*] *brunescens* SHARPE, Hand-List Gen. Spec. Birds, I, 1899, p. 200 (Cuba).
- [*Ocuiscus* (*Butorides*)] *brunescens* GUNDLACH, Journ. f. Orn., 1861, p. 338 (Cuba).
- [*Ardea* (*Butorides*)] *brunescens* GRAY, Hand-List Gen. Spec. Birds, III, 1871, p. 32 (Cuba).

Chars. sp.—Similar to *Butorides virescens* from Cuba, but entire neck purplish maroon, usually duller, without trace of a median lighter stripe or blackish streaks—only the chin paler, but this never white; posterior lower parts usually darker and more brownish; edge of wing with outer under wing-coverts not broadly creamy or buffy white, but blackish or brownish slate color, with only a *very* narrow whitish or buffy line along the extreme margin; edgings of superior wing-coverts either obsolescent or so deeply tawny as to be very inconspicuous, thus, at a little distance, giving the impression of their absence; bill usually all black; naked skin above lores also black, instead of whitish.

Description.—Adult male, No. 172,719, U. S. Nat. Mus.; Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, West Indies, July 2, 1900; W. Palmer and J. H. Riley. Pileum, occipital crest, postocular region, and a short sub-auricular streak, deep, somewhat bluish, glossy bottle green; rest of sides of head, with neck all around, purplish chestnut, the chin paler—light tawny ochraceous, the lower jugulum slightly paler and glaucous; upper surface of body deep, dull bottle green, the long, pointed, plume-like feathers of back and scapulars glaucous and somewhat bluish; wing-quills fuscous, the outer webs glossed with dull bluish green; all the superior wing-coverts somewhat glossy, bluish bottle green, more or less margined inconspicuously with tawny and chestnut; tail dark, bluish bottle green, somewhat glossy; posterior lower parts and lining of wing brownish slate gray, the thighs more rufescent.

Measurements.—Male: * Wing, 171 mm.; tail, 64; exposed culmen, 61; height of bill at base, 12; tarsus, 49; middle toe without claw, 39.

Female: † Wing, 163.5; tail, 61; exposed culmen, 60; height of bill at base, 11.2; tarsus, 48.8; middle toe without claw, 42.8.

Type locality.—Cuba.

Geographical distribution.—Cuba and the Isle of Pines.

This species is apparently about the size of the Cuban form of *Butorides virescens*, though the female seems to be appreciably smaller than the male. Seasonal and individual variation are slight.

The young bird in juvenal plumage differs from the adult much less than in *Butorides virescens*, but it is rather lighter and more rufescent below, particularly on the whole neck and sides of head; lower posterior surface less uniform; chin, cheeks, and median line of throat, jugulum, and breast streaked more or less with blackish and buffy—on throat, jugulum, and breast the shaft streaks are buffy, bordered on each side with dark earthy brown; upper surface of body duller, more greenish (less bluish); and the edgings of upper wing-coverts are much broader.

The specimens of *Butorides brunescens* examined are from Guama and other unspecified localities in Cuba, and from Nueva Gerona, in the Isle of Pines.

* U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 172,179; Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, July 2, 1900; W. Palmer and J. H. Riley.

† U. S. Nat. Mus., No. 172,720; Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, June 30, 1900; W. Palmer and J. H. Riley.